

vines, who, like Du Moulin and Jurieu, having muddled their judgement, and heated their imagination with a vain attempt to explain the prophecies, themselves at last turned prophets, and ventured to foretell the time, nay the very year, when the Papal Anticrist should perish. So eager were they to outrun one another in this race of absurdity, that the Protestants themselves were ashamed of the disgrace and scandal, and the synod of Saumur interposed the weight of its authority to check the fashionable folly, by forbidding any minister to undertake the explanation of the Apocalypse, without the permission of the provincial synod. We will leave these worthies to the merited castigation of Bossuet, who, in the thirteenth book of the History of the Variations of Protestant Churches, has treated this subject with uncommon powers of wit, argument, and eloquence.

Though the contraband dogma was of foreign manufacture, and imported by foreigners, it was soon adopted, and improved in this country by princes, prelates, and parsons. Jewel, Fox, Knox and Usher, were the dupes of this delusion. Without considering, that if the Church of Rome was the W— of Babylon, his own Church was only the son of a w—, Archbishop Whitgift maintained it in a public thesis at Oxford in 1509, when he commenced doctor of divinity—doubtless to the amusement and edification of that university. The royal pedant and Head of the Church, King James I. spent much time and labour to establish and recommend it. (Hist. of Pop. v. II. p. 83.) That the book of Homilies should admit the same prejudice, we are not surprised; but that the common Prayer Book should ever have insinuated, even in the devotions for the phrenetic festival for the 5th of November, that the Pope and Papists are an *Antichristian Babylonish sect*, almost exceeds belief. These pious ejaculations were expunged by the liberality of Charles I. But all the volumes of learned lumber which had been written, either abroad or at home, on the subject of Antichrist, were nothing but a rude and shapeless mass of bigotry, *rudis indigestaque moles quam dicere chaos*, before the time of our countryman, the Reverend Joseph Mede.

Mr. Mede was certainly a great curiosity? If we listened to the pompous panegyric of this gentleman by Dr. Hurd, we might suppose that he was a father of the Church, and apostle, or a prophet. He was indeed a man of a disinterested and charitable disposition, and of retired and studious habits. But all his biographers attest, that he was first a sceptic, and then a visionary. When he was a tutor at Cambridge, he was a believer in astrology, and with credulous confidence he cast the nativities and told the fortunes of his pupils: He afterwards became a wild interpreter of hieroglyphic symbols, a grave adept in the vain science of oneirocritics, or the interpretation of dreams; and before his death, which happened in 1638, a believer in the system of the Millenarians. (Encyclop. Brit. Art. Mede.) He spent many years of close application, and blotted much paper in learning, explaining, and recommending the dreams of these

occult and superstitious sciences. Whatever was extravagant in conjecture, or vain in research, was congenial to his credulous mind. A mind so amply furnished with credulity, so susceptible of delusion, and so little subject to the controul of sound judgment, had a strong predisposition for the Apocalypse mania. According to Dr. South's apophthegm, if such a man was not already mad, his stumbling on the Apocalypse was sure to make him so. It was calculated to gratify his restless curiosity, to feast his credulity, and to intoxicate his enthusiasm. Accordingly, his *Clavis Apocalypsis*, and other writings on the prophecies, embodied the scattered nonsense of his predecessors: gave a more tangible shape and apparent substance to their dreams; and enriched the baseless science with several new discoveries. His fervid imagination was not satisfied with applying one or two of the passages adopted by the innovators to the Pope and Popery, but embraced them all. Where his predecessors had hesitated, he was confident: where they had doubted, he believed. The phantasmagoria of this conjuror exhibited the poor Pope in the fantastic shapes of the Beast, the Man of Sin, the Scarlet Lady of Babylon, and Antichrist. The Catholics have always treated his writings with the contempt they deserve. Among the Protestants, they were variously received at their first appearance: "Some laughed, some mocked, some railed, some wept for joy;" and ever since, they have been applauded or condemned, admitted or refuted by men of his own communion, just in proportion as their minds were under the preponderance of bigotry or common sense.

Though Hammond, Whitby, Thorndike, Grotious, and others, have refuted the gratuitous principles which he laid down, and both ridiculed and repelled the consequences which he drew from them, Mede has still to boast of a multitude of admirers, and may justly be considered as the father of a new sect of Protestants, which for the sake of distinction may be called the Babylonian Sect. The Catholic faith, built on the only solid and legitimate foundation of *divine faith*, is one and unchangeable. But ever since the apostate Friar of Wittenberg adopted and proclaimed that fatal principle of anarchy in religion and disunion in belief, which has been the source of all the heresies that have lacerated and afflicted the Church of Christ; viz. that every man has a right to examine the Bible, and fashion his faith according to his own judgment and caprice; his deluded followers have been distinguished by nothing more remarkably, than by the accommodating mutability and unceasing variety of their creeds. While they have the Bible on their lips, they are in fact, and the fact is very natural, the dupes of *human opinions*, sometimes right, sometimes wrong, sometimes false and foolish; and on other occasions immoral and profane. With pity and sorrow, the Catholics foretold, near three centuries ago, the evil consequences which would result from the adoption of this Latitudinarian principle; and with the same sentiments of compassion and charity, we their successors can attest the accomplishment of their predic-

tion. Without filling one of our pages with a catalogue of the sects into which the reformation has been reformed, it is sufficient to mention on the present occasion, the Babylonians, and *paries cum paribus* the Swedenborgians, the Joanna Southcottians, and the various branches of Methodism—all appealing to, and outraging the Bible; all ranting and wrangling, with a confusion never surpassed.* Unenlightened by the sun of Catholic truth, and abandoned to the guidance of their own judgment, men of amiable virtues, and on subjects unconnected with religion, men of consummate wisdom, have often been bewildered in darkness, and entangled in the nets of heretical sophistry. It excites melancholy and awful reflections, to discover among the undistinguished and obscure herd of visionary Babylonians, names of such lustre in the annals of literature, as Lord Napier, the inventor of logarithms, and Sir Isaac Newton, the oracle of physical science. But waving at present the consideration, that the precious gift of faith is from above, "coming down from the Father of Lights," to account for the heterogeneous combination of so much wisdom and so much folly, in the mind of the same individual, we may observe that Lord Napier, began, and Sir Isaac ended his literary career, by writing dreams on the Apocalypse? and we may further observe, that in this wild and adventurous pursuit, the wise man sinks to the level of the fool, but with this pernicious consequence, that he contributes to keep the fool in countenance and credit. We suppress the caustic sarcasm of Voltaire out of respect to Sir Isaac Newton, who is the subject of it.

We could give a list of Right Reverends and Reverends in the Anglican pale, such as Potter, Man, and Bishop Newton, the last of whom indulged in these vagaries to soothe his melancholy for the loss of his wife; of ministers such as Fleming, Lowman, and Mosely, among the dissenters, and other preachers and pamphleteers, who with different degrees of ingenuity and superstitious confidence, advocated the Babylonian tenets, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But the sect was losing its credit and sinking fast into contempt and derision, till about the year 1769 it received a temporary impulse from a very singular institution, the Warburtonian Lectureship; and subsequently from certain freakish and superstitious speculations on the events engendered by the French Revolution. The imagination of their writers was grown so wanton; their ardent controversies, in which they invariably succeeded in refuting the hypotheses of their rivals, and as constantly failed in establishing their own, were so ridiculous and absurd; their elaborate dissertations on horns and beasts, on trumpets and vials, and particularly their voluminous jargon on the mystical number 666 and 1260, in which by the aid of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and when these would not suit their purpose, by extracting the square or cube root, they laboured to find some coincidence with

* See a late publication entitled, "The Wanderings of the Human Intellect; or a new Dictionary of the various Sects into which the Christian Religion has been divided, By the Rev. John Bell."